

ANGLER GUIDE



[Lake of the Ozarks](#) (Central Region) Information: 573/346-2210

Fishing Prospects for Lake of the Ozarks

Largemouth Bass electrofishing surveys conducted during the spring of 2002 indicated good numbers of fish over the 15-inch size limit which should result in good to excellent fishing in 2003. Good numbers of sub-legal bass will provide plenty of catch-and-release action. The outlook for Spotted Kentucky bass over the 12-inch size limit is average. Crappie fishing should be excellent this spring as densities are the highest that they have been in over a decade. Many of these fish are of legal size (9 inches) and a fair number are over 11 inches. In addition, the large 2001 yearclass should reach legal size by the fall of 2003 providing excellent fishing into 2004. Catfish action should be similar to the past few years. White bass fishing in 2003 should be good, as fairly high numbers of 6-8 inch fish were observed in the fall of 2002. Opportunities for catching Hybrid white bass are good in the Truman Dam tailwater and, during the summer and winter months, in spring-fed areas of the lake. **Walleye** are now well established in Lake of the Ozarks after 10 years consistent stocking. The fish stocked in 2001 enjoyed excellent survival. Most of these fish will reach a legal size of 15 inches by the spring of 2003. The lake also offers good fishing for a number of other species including **paddlefish, sunfish, gar, and carp**. Remember to use proper handling techniques when releasing sublegal (or legal) fish back to the water to ensure their survival.

Fishing Tips

Black bass Although bass can be caught year-round, the best times are spring and fall. Fish points, brush, and docks. The best producing lures are topwater baits (low light periods), plastic worms, crankbaits, and spinnerbaits. Winter is also an excellent time to fish for bass by slowly fishing jerkbaits off points.

Crappie The ability to locate good structure is the key to successful crappie fishing on Lake of the Ozarks. Good crappie fishing is often found during the spring spawning season. Late April through early May usually is best. Spawning begins when water temperature at the nest warms to the mid-50's, and usually peaks in the low to mid-60's. Most spawning occurs in coves or near their mouths, but you might find crappie along any bank with a gravel or woody structure. Crappie spawn at depths of 6-inch to over 20-foot depths, depending upon the water clarity. The clearer the water, the deeper they spawn. Spawning crappie can be caught with jigs (1/32 to 1/8 ounce), minnows, or small crank baits or spinners. Jigs are preferred by most anglers. Fish brushpiles and laydown timber where crappie concentrate. During spring, you might find crappie grouped off the bank around brushy structure and suspended at about the same depth as other spawning fish.

Crappie are typically hard to catch in summer and early fall, but fishing improves during October and November. Throughout this period, crappie are in deeper water (from 15 to 30 feet) at the mouths of coves or along steeper banks and bluffs. They still like to concentrate around woody structure. Fish with jigs or minnow, moving often to find the fish. Some anglers have success trolling along steeper banks

with small, deep-running crankbaits. By October, crappie head into shallower water again, changing location and depth frequently. In addition to the steeper banks, try fishing around points.

Winter can be one of the best times for crappie fishing, if you're willing to brave the elements. Small jigs or minnows fished slowly around structure in deep water along steep banks or bluffs is usually the best method. Crappie hits can be light during winter so watch for line movement.

Lake of the Ozarks regulations for crappie are 9-inch minimum length limit and 15 daily.

White bass and Hybrid striped bass In April and May, white bass migrate up several tributaries to spawn. Notable spawning runs take place in the Osage, Glaize, and Niangua Arms of Lake of the Ozarks. Although hybrid striped bass may be caught along with white bass during this time, they do not spawn. The population of hybrid striped bass in Lake of the Ozarks is being maintained through stockings by the Conservation Department.

During the remainder of the year, these fish are found in main lake areas near some kind of underwater structures (e.g., underwater humps, sharp points) or near drop-offs just outside flats and humps. White bass and hybrid striped bass may be caught by vertically jigging, casting or trolling spoons, jigs, and crankbaits. Something to keep in mind is that the bulk of the diet of white and hybrid striped bass is gizzard shad so your baits should imitate shad (white, silver or silver and black are good colors). Mid to late summer is also the time when white bass may surface to feed on schools of gizzard shad. Schools of feeding bass are located by surface activity which usually occurs early in the morning or late in the evening. Casting small surface or shallow running crankbaits, jigs, or spinners into a feeding school of white bass can give incredible results. Catching fish on every cast or two fish per cast if jigs are tied in tandem is not uncommon. This type of feeding activity is somewhat unpredictable. Fall white bass fishing typically involves fishing windy main lake points with deep diving crankbaits, jigs, or spinners. This activity usually starts in September and continues into November.

Good areas to locate hybrid striped bass include both the Truman and Bagnell Dam tailwaters and spring fed areas of the lake.

Lake of the Ozarks regulations for white bass and hybrid striped bass are 15 daily in the aggregate, no more than 4 daily can be larger than 18 inches.

Walleye Walleye are typically caught on steep rocky points on crankbaits, jigs, and minnows. In March and April, walleye make a spawning migration up into the Osage and Niangua Arms of Lake of the Ozarks. Although some natural reproduction may occur, the population of walleye in Lake of the Ozarks is being maintained through stockings by the Conservation Department.

Blue, channel and flathead catfish The best months are usually May through September. Some of the more popular methods for catching catfish include:

- Drifting with pole and line in the evenings over flats and shallow areas with shad.
- Setting trotlines next to the old river channel where the water depth changes abruptly from deep to shallow.
- Drifting jugs over the flats and shallow areas near the main channel and off points.
- Fishing rip rap areas along the dam and bridge abutments in June when catfish are spawning.

Trolling crankbaits over gradually sloping points also works well at this time.

· Popular baits for channel catfish are shad, cut shad, and prepared baits; for blue catfish they are shad, cut shad, and live baits; and live baits (sunfish less than 5" or goldfish) are best for flathead catfish. Truman Lake regulations for channel and blue catfish are 10 daily in the aggregate and 5 daily for flathead catfish. Truman Lake typically has good catfish fishing.

Paddlefish The paddlefish snagging season is March 15 through April 30. The best areas include the upper Osage Arm above the 70 mile mark and the Niangua Arm from the Hwy 54 Bridge down to the Mouth. The population of paddlefish in Lake of the Ozarks is being maintained through stockings by the Conservation Department.